surface water in jerry cans, bringing them back to the tents, one at a time, on their backs. Clothes are kept clean in the desert, and the women do the washing.

The care of children from birth until they are a few years old is the responsibility of the woman. Childbirth causes a minimum interruption in the daily sequence of a mother's activities. The child is breastfed if the mother has milk; if not, a wet nurse is sought or goat milk is substituted. Other than the time given to feeding it, the infant does not take up much of the mother's time. It is placed in a hammock slung between the centre poles of the tent and rocked by the mother as she passes to and fro. If nursing in illness is required, the mother devotes herself to it; her other tasks must then be performed by another woman.

As children acquire mobility, and at a time when, perhaps, the mother is pregnant again, they become so fractious one with the other that if help was unavailable the nervous strain could seriously disrupt the normal routine of work. During the early years of marriage, when daughters are still too young to look after their small brothers and sisters, the grandmother's help in child-rearing is invaluable. Too old for the arduous tasks of the daily routine, she may assist in teasing and spinning the raw wool, but it is in her role as nursemaid that she assumes importance. Children of both sexes are given the comfort of suckling at her breast, receiving attention and care for which the young mother could not possibly afford the time.

Caring for children takes up little of a man's time, and is mostly incidental. The woman, on the other hand, devotes relatively little of her time to the animals. She does the milking in spring — of camels, sheep and goats — but herding is not her responsibility, save for partly tending goats. Goats, when they are in the vicinity of the camp, are looked after by boys and girls of about eight to ten years of age. In springtime when they have dropped their young, or if some of them have to be retained in the camp at night for various reasons, the woman makes a brushwood enclosure at the side of the tent and sees the goats safely inside before nightfall.

A catalogue of the tasks for which women are responsible may not seem very impressive; the number of tasks is not excessive, but the persistence of the routine bends the backs of most women. Paradoxically, any suggestion that men should take over female tasks would strike them as absurd. Assistance from one of the same sex is always a welcome relief, but the abrogation of a particular task by men would be interpreted by women as the loss of a right. For, in the division of labour, it is not merely that tasks are allocated between the sexes for expedient reasons, or in consideration of the labour involved or because tasks which can be performed in the vicinity of the camp are left to women; division of labour would not make sense on these grounds, however strong they may be in Bedouin sentiments. Each task which falls to the lot of woman constitutes a right exclusive to her. Fetching firewood is not only a chore; it is a woman's prerogative. The insistence that only a woman can undertake certain tasks has nothing to do with her liking

Cases

462 424 them or any innate aptitude for them; this insistence is an index of the jealousy with which she is prepared to guard her rights. Each right derived from this or that small task is an extension of her control over the male.

462 424 252 The force and significance of this control is, perhaps, best seen in a woman's right to cook. At marriage a woman must have at least the minimum of cooking utensils, and one of the rights a man acquires in a woman is that she cooks for him. This is something a man cannot do for himself. [593] Therefore, when a man ill-treats his wife or threatens her with divorce, she can retaliate by refusing to cook, or leave the tent altogether to return to her father. A man bereft of this service is in a very sorry plight indeed. The legal dominance of the male, seemingly autocratic, is reduced at every point by the control a woman exercises through her exclusive right to perform tasks. The limits to the area of her coercive powers are significant. 562 They are confined almost wholly to domestic relationships. Legally, women suffer such disabilities that they are almost of the status of minors; in reality, their day-to-day living is far from intolerable because they are able to control males over a wide field of relationships.

462 424 231 Men, excluded in the main from domestic duties around the tent, perform tasks to which their legal rights are tied. While women have access to wells for water used by human beings, the transport of larger quantities of water over longer distances, requiring the use of camels, is a task which falls to the men. Watering of animals is done by men. Only they can slaughter the animals for food. The meat of an animal slaughtered by a woman is not "free," in a ritual sense, for human consumption. In an extremity only, a woman can, in effect, kill an animal, but the knife which cuts its throat must be held in a male hand, even if it is the hand of a very small boy. 462 The exploitation of the land is also the male prerogative. They [424] plough and sow the grain; incidental help may be provided by wives working [241] alongside their husbands during the early part of reaping, but the main reaping is done entirely by men. Transportation of grain to the mounds is also carried out by men, and it is they only who have access to the grain stores when quantities are withdrawn for family use. Sheep-shearing is [236] carried out entirely by males,[10] the fleeces are stacked by them and the [432] distribution and sales of these is directed by the male head of the tent.

Additional to these major tasks which males undertake are a number of minor ones. Men sew strips of cotton together to make clothes for both sexes. They also make rope of grass, albeit in a desultory sort of way, by twisting together the strands between the palms of the hands. A number of [834] other tasks fall to the men by virtue of the fact that the sexes are separated [342] in the tent by a divider of blanket material, which may be taken down when only members of the elementary family are about, but which is put

[461] [533] [538] [831] [10] This work is reserved for the younger men and takes the form of a festival during which lewd songs are sung and poems with obscene themes or references are recited loudly and within the hearing of elders, in a manner not dissimilar to the behaviour of bachelors at a wedding.